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Next 1 Page(s) In Document Exempt

Approved For Release 2005/08/16 : CIA-RDP79T00865A000100320001-6

25X1

CONTENTS

1. **What is the primary purpose of the study?**

25X1

Europe's New View of the Developing States . 8-9

25X1

25X1

SECRET

25X1

Approved For Release 2005/08/16 : CIA-RDP79T00865A000100320001-6

Next 3 Page(s) In Document Exempt

Approved For Release 2005/08/16 : CIA-RDP79T00865A000100320001-6

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25X1A

Icelandic-West German Fishing Dispute Still
Simmering

Another incident in the fishing dispute between Iceland and West Germany and Reykjavik's lukewarm response to the possibility of resuming talks between the two countries have aggravated an already tense situation.

On January 12, an Icelandic ship cut the trawls of a West German fishing vessel allegedly found fishing within Iceland's self-declared 50 mile zone. It was the first incident at sea since last November.

In the meantime, Foreign Minister Agustsson recently confirmed press speculation that Iceland had received an invitation from Bonn to resume negotiations aimed at ending the dispute. Agustsson reportedly said that the government had not taken a position on the proposal since it was not clear that new talks would produce results.

The conflict between Iceland and West Germany erupted last November when a German fishing vessel was fired upon and seized by the Icelandic Coast Guard. Talks have been suspended since last October because of disagreements within the governing Progressive and Independence parties.

The current dispute will probably lead to a resumption of negotiations. The Icelanders are looking for a tougher agreement than the one that ended the cod war with the UK in 1973. Iceland would like to limit, if not completely ban, West German trawlers to prevent massive catches that would deplete important resources.

25X1

January 14, 1975

-5-

SECRET

25X1

Approved For Release 2005/08/16 : CIA-RDP79T00865A000100320001-6

Next 1 Page(s) In Document Exempt

Approved For Release 2005/08/16 : CIA-RDP79T00865A000100320001-6

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25X1A

Europe's New View of the Developing States

Recent public comments by EC Commissioner Claude Cheysson in Morocco provide a striking illustration of the new relationship that is evolving between Europe and the developing world, especially the Arab states. Cheysson's remarks, as well as recent comments by Commission President Ortoli, imply a sense of European impotence with regard to those countries which supply raw materials, particularly oil.

Cheysson's visit to Morocco is part of an EC effort to conclude negotiations on a comprehensive association agreement to be signed in February. According to Cheysson, the agreement would mark the beginning of a profoundly different relationship between the EC and Morocco, one based on a new European awareness of its dependence on producers of raw materials. The EC official referred in Rabat to Europe's "fear of being strangled by the need for raw materials and energy" but also noted that European dependence ensures a certain equality in future relations between Europe, the Arab world and the developing countries.

Citing past European arrogance and neglect of the developing countries, Cheysson almost apologized for the meager terms of the EC's 1969 agreement with Morocco. The new agreement will provide far more generous terms for Morocco, including protocols on financial assistance, industrial and technical cooperation, and equal treatment for migrant workers.

The agreement is part of a more comprehensive EC policy to expand trade and influence throughout the Mediterranean area. The EC hopes this policy will also set a pattern for future relations with the oil-producing states of the Middle East.

In line with this intent, the EC may approach Morocco to serve as a broker in the current talks

January 14, 1975

- 8 -

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

of the EC Nine with the Arab League. This dialogue is currently stalled over the question of giving the Palestinian Liberation Organization observer status in the negotiations. EC members are sharply divided over this issue, but Cheysson nevertheless stated that the PLO would participate in the Euro-Arab talks.

Last week EC Commission President Ortoli also called on the Nine to improve relations with the developing countries and to take emergency action to reduce EC dependence on external sources of raw materials. Ortoli noted the absence of political will in the community over the past two years and urged that the Commission adopt a more active political role in the future, vigorously exercising its right to initiate actions in this area.

The EC Commission did announce an energy action program this week that would eventually increase European leverage on oil producers through accelerated research on alternate sources of energy and energy conservation. The new program, which is now before the Council of Ministers, has been under discussion since last July. [redacted]

25X1

25X1

January 14, 1975

-9-

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25X1

Approved For Release 2005/08/16 : CIA-RDP79T00865A000100320001-6

Next 1 Page(s) In Document Exempt

Approved For Release 2005/08/16 : CIA-RDP79T00865A000100320001-6

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